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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0309

INFO RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

UNCLAS MANAGUA 001376

SIPDIS  
PM/DTCC - BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: ETTC KOMC NU  
SUBJECT: NICARAGUA: BLUE LANTERN 050200863 AND GC-189609: ARMERIA MAGNUM

REF: 09 STATE 120098

General Background

¶1. On December 1, Econoff and ARSO met with Salvador Luna, owner of Armeria Magnum, at his store located in Centro Comercial, a large shopping

Reftel Questions

¶3. In response to reftel questions, Luna told Emboffs that he sells pistols, rifles, shotguns, revolvers, accessories, clothing, holsters and carrying equipment, and bullets. He also runs a shooting range. [Note: RSO personnel and local guards train at Luna's facility. End Note.] His main customers are security companies and their personnel, workers on farms and ranches, and wealthier individuals who shoot for recreational or competitive purposes. He is also authorized to sell guns to other licensed gun stores in Managua. He stated that there are occasions when he imports guns in cooperation with other gun stores because the sellers take the order more seriously when it is a larger order. He stated that he has no relationship to Gun Depot or Ricardo Alfonso Umana Luna of Guatemala. He added that he does not sell firearms to customers who reside outside of Nicaragua because it is against the law.

¶4. Mr. Luna reported that his annual sales of U.S.-origin firearms are approximately 100 to 200 firearms per year. He said that he imports approximately the same amount of U.S.-origin firearms per year and only a very small percentage come from countries other than the United States. He was able to show paper records documenting his sales.

¶5. Econoff spoke with Comisionado Horacio Sobalvarro, Chief of the Weapons Division of the National Police. He had no information to report on Mr. Luna or Armeria Magnum that would call into question the company's reliability as a recipient of U.S. defense articles. He stated that Armeria Magnum is properly authorized to import and sell defense articles in Nicaragua.

Third Country Purchases

¶6. Mr. Luna reported that he purchased 200 Smith & Wesson .38 caliber revolvers from Centrum S.A. in El Salvador once in October 2007, and provided documentation for the purchase. He said the purchase was paid for by a wire transfer through a bank. He asserted that he has not purchased guns from Centrum since then. He imported guns once from a seller called Kerberos Trade Ltd., a company located in the Czech Republic, though none of those guns were U.S.-origin. He purchases guns from S.K. International Arms Trading Ltd., a company located in Israel. However, only 10 firearms out of a total of 320 purchased from this company were U.S.-origin firearms (four High Standard revolvers, and six Harrington Richardson revolvers); the rest were from other countries. Mr. Luna provided documentation of his company's purchases from the Czech Republic and Israel. It appears that he buys the majority of his U.S.-origin guns directly from the United States through Valor Corporation in Florida and Century Arms in Vermont.

¶7. Luna said that he is familiar with the regulations governing the import of U.S-origin defense articles, but was unaware of the restrictions

Physical Security

¶8. The store's security is comparable to that of other gun stores in Nicaragua. The store is protected at night by an armed security guard em

Comment

¶9. Mr. Luna seems eager to follow international law governing gun sales. He is enthusiastic about his relationship with the United States and the Embassy. He noted that he trained with shooting guru Jeff Cooper at the American Pistol Institute in Arizona. He is elated that the RSO and Marine Security Guards train at his shooting range. He was cooperative and eager to provide detailed documentation of his sales. He emphasized that in the firearms business it is vital to take the need for strict regulation seriously. It is post's opinion that if there was any wrongdoing in the import of firearms from Centrum S.A., Mr. Luna was probably unaware of it. In post's assessment, Armeria Magnum is a reliable recipient of United States Munitions List (USML) items.

CALLAHAN